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HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRESS IN ARGENTINA

There have been significant improvements in Argentina's human rights situation since the 1981 legislation requiring certification was passed. The change is most dramatic in the area of political rights where the Government has committed itself to elections in October 1983 and a transfer of power to an elected government by January 1984. Political activity is now intense as political parties and labor unions organize, inscribe voters and hold public rallies in advance of internal party elections scheduled for June/July. Despite some media restrictions, the press is considerably more open than in 1981, with criticism of the government now reflected amply in most newspapers.

Given Argentina's political history, one can not rule out the possibility of a military coup to prevent the democratic transition. All available evidence indicates, however, that such an action is unlikely to occur, certainly over the next 6-12 months. While the military will continue to be a major force, exercising considerable influence over Argentina's political future, the military as an institution appears ready to return to the barracks in order to rebuild military professionalism and recover lost national prestige. President Bignone and Army Commander Nicolaides seem firmly committed to the political transition and have held the military successfully to that course since July 1982.

In the area of individual rights, there have been no confirmed long-term disappearances for over two years, almost no new detentions for national security or political reasons, greatly reduced charges of torture or serious mistreatment of political prisoners and the accelerated release of PEN prisoners during the past 10 months. The state of siege, in effect since 1974, will be lifted before the elections and all remaining PEN prisoners will be released or brought to trial before the end of the year.

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

☒ Release () Excise () Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: () In Part ☒ In Full

() Classify as () Extend as () Downgrade to

Date Declassify on Reason

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